IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently amended): A process for preparing dinitrotoluene, comprising: ~~the steps of~~

a) reacting toluene with nitric acid in the presence of sulfuric acid to give a mononitrotoluene reaction mixture[[,]];

b) separating the mononitrotoluene reaction ~~product~~ mixture from ~~step~~ a) in a dynamic separator into an organic phase comprising mononitrotoluene and an aqueous phase comprising sulfuric acid[[,]];

c) reacting the organic phase comprising mononitrotoluene with nitric acid in the presence of sulfuric acid to give a dinitrotoluene reaction mixture[[,]]; and

d) separating the dinitrotoluene reaction ~~product~~ mixture from ~~step~~ c) into an organic phase comprising dinitrotoluene and an aqueous phase comprising sulfuric acid[[,]];

wherein the mononitrotoluene reaction ~~product~~ mixture from ~~step~~ a) has a content of toluene of ~~0.1-10~~ 0.5 to 8% by weight, based on the organic phase, and a content of nitric acid of from 0.1 to 1.2% by weight, based on the aqueous phase, and the phase separation in ~~step~~ b) is effected in such a way that further reaction of the toluene with the nitric acid is prevented.

Claim 2 (Currently amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the ~~reaction product from step a) has a~~ content of toluene in the organic phase of the mononitrotoluene reaction mixture is ~~of~~ from 3.5 to 5% by weight ~~based on the weight of the reaction mixture from step a)~~.

Claim 3 (Canceled).

Claim 4 (Currently amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the organic phase comprising mononitrotoluene from ~~step~~ b) is transferred to ~~step~~ c) without further workup.

Claim 5 (Currently amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the aqueous phases comprising sulfuric acid from ~~steps~~ b) and d) are reused in ~~step~~ a) and c).

Claim 6 (Currently amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the ~~reaction apparatus used for steps~~ the reaction of toluene with nitric acid in a) and the reaction of the organic phase comprising mononitrotoluene c) are conducted apparatus selected from the group consisting of stirred tanks, flow reactors ~~or~~ and both stirred tanks and flow reactors.

Claim 7 (Currently amended): The process according claim 1, wherein ~~step~~ a) is carried out in one reaction apparatus.

Claim 8 (Currently amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein ~~step~~ c) is carried out in a maximum of two reaction apparatus connected in series.

Claim 9 (Currently amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein ~~step~~ a temperature of the reaction of toluene with nitric acid in a) is ~~carried out at a temperature~~ in the range between 35 and 70°C.

Claim 10 (Currently amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein ~~step~~ a temperature the reaction of the organic phase comprising mononitrotoluene c) is ~~carried out at a temperature~~ in the range between 60 and 85°C.

Claim 11 (Currently amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein ~~the~~ a molar ratio of nitric acid to toluene in ~~stage~~ the reaction of toluene with nitric acid in a) is in the range between 0.95 and 1.12.

Claim 12 (Currently amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein ~~the~~ a molar ratio of nitric acid to mononitrotoluene in ~~stage~~ the reaction of the organic phase comprising mononitrotoluene c) is in the range between 1.03 and 1.10.

Claim 13 (Currently amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the aqueous phase comprising sulfuric acid from ~~stage~~ b) is concentrated to give sulfuric acid having a concentration of from 85 to 96% and recycled in ~~stage~~ a).

Claim 14 (Currently amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the aqueous phase comprising sulfuric acid from ~~stage~~ d) is admixed with nitric acid and recycled into ~~stage~~ a).

Claim 15 (Currently amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the nitric acid supplied in ~~stage~~ a) and ~~stage~~ c) has a concentration of from 58 to 100% by weight HNO_3.